

# Farmer-Labor Party Prospects

**A**N effort to reconstitute the national third-party movement on a practical and substantial basis is now in progress following a conference of third-party groups in St. Paul.

These are the outstanding facts regarding this meeting:

1. It was called by Minnesota farmer-labor leaders who have recently achieved a series of third-party victories which culminated in the election of two United States senators and two congressmen.

2. It was primarily a conference of farmer-labor leaders of those northwestern states wherein a substantial farmer-labor or third-party vote has been developed as a result of work done first by the farmers' Nonpartisan League and later by organized labor in alliance with the organized farmers.

3. It resulted in the tender of the leadership of the national third-party movement to Minnesota for the 1924 campaign, which undoubtedly means that the Northwest farmer-labor movement and methods are to be the basis, by common consent, of a reshaped national third-party movement.

4. The Minnesota leaders took the initiative, called the conference and accepted the leadership at the earnest request of the outstanding leaders or officials of practically every third-party group in the United States, most of which were represented in the conference.

5. The meeting was of a character which justifies the hope that rainbow chasing, sectarian dogmatism and factional strife have disappeared among third-party leaders after years of division and failure, and that there has succeeded a sense that success can come only through the unity of all elements opposed to the existing two-party control.

The result of the meeting was that the Farmer-Labor party leaders of Minnesota were authorized to call a national third-party convention in St. Paul or Minneapolis on May 30, 1924, for the purpose of reconstituting the national third-party movement on the proposed new basis, formulating a platform and nominating a President and Vice-President.

This action is full of interesting implications and promises of developments, not the least important of which is the practical certainty now that a third-party candidate for President will be nominated, and this regardless of what third-party "possibilities" like Senator La Follette may do. The new Northwestern leadership is particularly anxious to name for President an outstanding national figure like La Follette; but it will not sacrifice certain other things to gain this desirable end. It will not

sacrifice, for instance, the distinct third-party character of the movement, nor *organized political action* on a farmer-labor basis, which has given the movement its present strength and prestige.

Of greater importance even than an outstanding national standard bearer is the organic, economic character of the third-party movement in the Northwest. Without conspicuous leadership it has won to its cause half the voters of Minnesota and North Dakota, has attained second place in Idaho and Washington, a close third place in South Dakota, Montana, Nebraska and Oklahoma, and substantial followings in Colorado, Texas and Kansas. Its leaders believe that even without wellknown national standard bearers in presidential years they can break up the existing political monopoly by consolidating their gains in the Northwest and extending their system into other states. This does not mean, however, that they would not go a long way to enlist a candidate for President whose name would bring prestige and votes.

One must understand the background of the St. Paul conference to gather its significance. This background is the development in the Northwest and particularly in Minnesota of the farmer-labor movement since 1915. This movement is much more than mere political insurgence against old party machines and revolt against economic monopolies.

Organized political action as practised in the Northwest originated with the farmers' Nonpartisan League in North Dakota. The Nonpartisan League resorted to organized political action for two very pertinent reasons:

First, the embattled farmers of North Dakota found themselves confronted by an organized industrial and financial power which functioned invisibly through the political government. It wore the mask of political democracy and ruled by controlling two political parties and keeping the people divided. There was no way to meet such a camouflaged power in direct combat except by organizing the people representing the basic economic interests attacked by this power—the farmers and industrial wage-earners. Organized political action became in North Dakota a uniting of the farmers in the political field to defend the threatened agricultural interests.

The second reason for using political action was the fact that the farmers' only defence at that time lay in the control of one or the other of the old political parties, which could not be realized except through a close organization of the actual farmer voters for that purpose.

This was the so-called North Dakota idea,

which was transformed in Minnesota after 1915 under new conditions into the Minnesota idea. When the hosts of Nonpartisan League organizers steered their ubiquitous Fords into Minnesota in 1915 and 1916 there was an agrarian invasion of a state that is largely industrial in character. The invaders not only found more than 50,000 embittered farmers ready and waiting to join the League, but they met an organized labor movement in Minnesota 100,000 strong, insurgent, militant and looking toward the future. Out of this contact arose the farmer-labor movement. Out of the farmer-labor movement came the development toward a political third party. If the North Dakota idea is "nonpartisan" organized political action, the Minnesota idea is party action on an organized basis by the real producers and all others who recognize that the liberation of the productive interests is not class action, but essentially mass action in the interest of true democracy.

Within two years of the beginning of the agrarian invasion of Minnesota there had arisen there the Working People's Nonpartisan League, designed to cooperate with the farmers' Nonpartisan League. The farmers' League was composed of closely organized, dues-paying individuals; the Labor League of affiliated dues-paying trade unions. It came in a few years to represent the bulk of the trade unions of the state.

The farmer-labor vote resulting from this political cooperation grew, rapidly, steadily and consistently. In 1918 after a campaign waged by the two Leagues for the joint gubernatorial candidate, Evans, the vote was 111,000. In 1920 the average vote for the candidates indorsed by the Leagues was about 200,000. The vote for Henrik Shipstead for governor was 250,000. In 1922 after the organization of the Farmer-Labor party, Shipstead was elected United States Senator by a vote of 325,000. Magnus Johnson, candidate for governor, received 295,000 votes. The average Farmer-Labor vote was forty-three percent of the total vote cast. In 1923 Magnus Johnson received 295,000 votes and was elected United States Senator. This was fifty-seven percent of the total vote cast.

No active leader in the Minnesota farmer-labor movement believes that adverse agricultural and labor conditions, or special grievances of voters, or an awakened desire to revolt against old party machines are the most important causes of this growing vote. They are agreed that the chief cause is the work of education and organization that has gone on steadily under the system of organized political action. It was a case of converting half the voters of a great state to a liberal or radical position by organized methods under conditions favorable to such conversion. The same adverse conditions experienced in Minnesota existed in other states, but there was no corre-

sponding change in the minds of the people. There would have been no change in Minnesota had there been no organized farmer-labor movement engaged in making that change. The Northwestern leaders firmly believe that what has been done in Minnesota and North Dakota and to a less degree in other Northwestern states can be done by the same methods in other states, and it cannot be done except by these or some other equally effective methods of political organization and education.

The change from the two Nonpartisan Leagues to a third party has not been entirely completed, but is proceeding rapidly. The process began in 1920 and was necessitated by inevitable developments. The Leagues made unsuccessful attempts to capture the Republican party and name in the primaries. In each case they were obliged to file an independent ticket in the general election in order to remain in the political struggle. In the meantime, the badly frightened stalwarts in the Republican party saw to it that the "nonpartisan" methods of the farmer and workers Leagues were made increasingly difficult until it became necessary to organize a third party, which was done in 1921. The Leagues were left intact as the two constituent wings of the party, which is only the common ground of joint committees and officials from the two Leagues. Efforts to bring about a still closer party organization culminated in September, 1923, in a conference which formulated a plan to federate the economic and political organizations of the farmers and labor, and other progressive groups, in a solid party which would supersede the two Leagues. This plan has been indorsed by practically the entire labor movement, and quite a number of farmer clubs and district organizations and other progressive groups.

Such is the background of the Northwestern third-party movement which may soon offer itself as the "working model" of a national third-party effort. The St. Paul conference, foreshadowing this, was called on the initiative of H. G. Teigen, secretary of the farmers' Nonpartisan League and William Mahomey, president of the Working People's Nonpartisan League. Following the election of Magnus Johnson to the Senate by the Farmer-Labor party, letters poured in to Minnesota from representatives of various third-party groups throughout the country suggesting that it take the lead and help to give America a third party like that in the Northwest. The officials of the Leagues evolved the idea of basing a national third-party movement on what had there been accomplished.

At the conference most of these states were represented by outstanding leaders. In addition insurgent Wisconsin was represented, as were the leading national third-party groups.

The Northwest progressive leaders who attend-

ed the conference have learned by hard experience that attractive theories and brilliant platforms alone will not entice the average American voter from his rockbound old party affiliations. He can be "organized" and "educated" away as he has been to a large extent in the Northwest, or he can be jolted loose by such impressive results as those of the Roosevelt progressive movement. The Northwest "nonpartisan" idea was based largely upon the "impressive-vote" plan. By capturing an old party name it aimed to keep close to the big vote.

The Northwest offers an encouraging third-party vote upon which to found a national third-party movement. In 1922 the average Farmer-Labor vote in North Dakota was practically equal to the opposition vote, the offices being almost equally divided (the Farmer-Labor forces secured the post of United States Senator and their opponents that of governor).

In 1922 the South Dakota vote for governor was Republican, 78,813; Democratic, 50,252;

Farmer-Labor, 46,775. In 1922, in Montana, Burton K. Wheeler was elected to the United States Senate after he had been forced upon the Democratic ticket by the Farmer-Labor alliance. In the election before he had run as an independent candidate of the Farmer-Labor forces. The vote for Wheeler in 1922 was 88,205; for his Republican opponent, 69,464.

The Progressive, or Farmer-Labor vote in Idaho in 1922 was 40,516; the Democratic vote was 36,810; the Republican vote was 50,538. In the 1922 election in the state of Washington Dill was indorsed by the conservative wing of the Farmer-Labor party. He ran on the Democratic ticket and received 130,347 votes against 126,410 for the Republican candidate. The radical wing of the Farmer-Labor party put up its own candidate who received 35,326 votes.

The Northwest third-party movement may yet become the wedge that will split the bi-partisan monopoly.

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## The Mystery of Manet

THE hubbub provoked by Manet's pictures, the public abuse, the private insults, the notoriety which induced Degas sarcastically to observe "Il est plus connu que Garibaldi," have often led people to suppose that Manet invented impressionism. Such volumes of vituperation, they fancy, could never have been aimed at a single head; surely they were thrown to bespatter a movement: and the movement to be bespattered was impressionism, of course. As a matter of fact, Manet began to experiment in *pleinairisme* only about the year 1870, and the first of his pictures generally to be reckoned "impressionist," and as such reviled, was the *Argenteuil* exposed in 1875; whereas the pictures that aroused the grand brouhaha were *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, first exhibited in 1863, and *L'Olympia*, which was painted in the same year and shown in 1865. Both were painted in the studio in an arranged light, and neither is painted with the systematic palette and little touches which are the essential characteristics of impressionist painting.

What, then, was Manet's unpardonable offence, or what were his offences, in the eyes of academic painters and the general public? To suppose, as M. Jacques Blanche appears to suppose, that his sole offence lay in the fact that he was a good, contemporary artist is, I think, to overwork a good hypothesis. True enough it is that, so long as young, a good artist is almost always disapproved of by the flock and its bellwethers. Were Raphael living now—as, being a genuine artist, he probably would not be content to copy the work of some

one who painted four hundred years ago—it is equally probable that his pictures, on their first appearance, would be greeted with general execration. The established painters, the leading critics, the public and the old gentlemen who write to the papers would undoubtedly treat him as they treated Cézanne and Matisse; the Slade students would be forbidden to admire his work; and only with infinite difficulty would the Tate Gallery be compelled to accept one of his pictures as a gift. Nevertheless, it is probable that, as in the case of Cézanne, the general public would, after a few years, grow bored with the subject, while a few years later the professional painters—not, of course, the schoolmasters and directors of galleries—would come to recognize some part of his merit: whereas Manet was held in general execration for twenty years at least, and seventeen years after his death it required a superhuman effort to get *L'Olympia* accepted by the Luxembourg.

However, it is with that early storm of almost incredible violence which raged against Manet during the 'sixties—when little was heard of impressionism—that I am here concerned. What had Manet done that his name should be universally anathema? The academic painters found their pretext in his technique, which they declared to be clean contrary to the great tradition of painting. A theory had somehow got itself established in the studios that a pure color was never to be placed alongside another pure color, but was to be led up to through a series of semi-tones; the result of which theory was canvases whose uniform black-